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Apart from the infamy which attaches to the business of a spy, no stain rests on his memory. He was warm-hearted, generous, and affectionate in the relations of private life, and no man had more devoted friends. His early manhood was clouded by disappointed hopes ; but after he joined the army he seems to have recovered the natural elasticity of his spirits, and he entered warmly into the various amusements by which the English troops in America enlivened the tedium of garrison duty. His parts were originally good, and they were probably better cultivated than those of most of his associates. His letters are in general written with ease and dignity ; his poetry is not without merit ; and his pen-and-ink sketches and other drawings are creditable alike to his skill and to his taste in such matters.

ART. VI. — 1. *Essai sur Tite Live*. Par H. TAINE, ancien Élève de l'Ecole Normale, Docteur ès Lettres. Ouvrage couronné par l'Académie Française. Deuxième Edition. 1 vol. 12mo.

2. *Les Philosophes Français du XIX^e Siècle*. Par H. TAINE. Deuxième Edition. 1 vol. 12mo.

3. *Essais de Critique et d'Histoire*. Par H. TAINE. Deuxième Edition. 1 vol. 12mo.

4. *La Fontaine et ses Fables*. Par H. TAINE. Troisième Edition. 1 vol. 12mo. 1861.

THE French press is still noted for the impartiality, soundness, and originality of its literary criticism. It has always been one of the leading habits of the Paris periodicals to open their columns to elaborate essays, often the first efforts of men destined in after life to occupy the highest rank in the science and politics of their country. Some papers, such as *Le Pays* and *La Presse*, publish weekly flippant and superficial articles ; but others, among which *Les Débats* occupies a prominent place, invariably print critical notices which vie in importance with the most finished dissertations to be found

in the leading European Reviews. Sacy, Franck, Renan, Laboulaye, Saint-Marc Girardin, and a score of others, all well known by literary labors of considerable merit, frequently grace the columns of that celebrated journal with highly wrought criticisms. The result of a course so wise and so liberal is to bring forth articles destined to survive the ephemeral existence of the papers in which they were originally inserted, and to obtain the honor — so dear to a French critic — of being preserved in the lasting form of octavos.

It is not our present purpose to speak of those who, like Sainte-Beuve, Janin, and T. Gautier, have long been known and appreciated wherever the French language is spoken or read ; but of a new generation of essayists, already exercising a controlling influence, and evidently destined to occupy the first place among the master-spirits of their national literature. The fact is, that France at this moment can boast of a number of young men highly gifted, thoroughly educated, and eager to attain the position to which their talents and patriotism fully entitle them. Their efforts and principles deserve to be more generally known ; and, unable to speak here of them all, we select one, H. Taine, as a type worthy of study and analysis.

M. Hippolyte Taine is a man of about thirty years of age, a native of the department of the Ardennes, a graduate of the Normal School, and at present one of the literary editors of *Les Débats*. He was altogether unknown, save by his having gained the highest honors in the gift of the University, when in 1853 the French Academy, having offered a prize for an essay on the genius of Livy, our youthful licentiate entered the lists, and obtained the coveted palm with great credit to himself and to the celebrated institution of which he had been for several years one of the most brilliant pupils.

His works consist, besides the above prize essay, of two theses, one of which, on La Fontaine's Fables, has since been enlarged, and several times published in a book form ; a series of elaborate essays on Addison, Macaulay, Thackeray, Dickens, Carlyle, Michelet, and Guizot, originally inserted in *Les Débats*, and reprinted under the title of *Essais de Critique et d'Histoire* ; a Journey to the Pyrenees ; and, finally, a

scorching, witty, and analytical review of the doctrines taught by Royer-Collard, Cousin, and Jouffroy, which, under the name of *Les Philosophes Français du XIX^e Siècle*, created a sensation still deeply felt among the numerous disciples of the eclectic school.

The excellences of our author consist in his style and method ; — the one clear, forcible, and concise ; the other analytical in form, though somewhat hypothetic in fact, bold, novel, and striking. Divesting the method of a certain phraseology, often unavoidable when discussing abstruse subjects and semi-Hegelian doctrines, we will endeavor to abridge and explain its leading features.

While analyzing any group of human events, we find that all its parts depend on one another. Thus, throughout the same age or era, — for instance, that of Pericles, Augustus, or Louis XIV., — the religion, philosophy, arts, form of government, public manners, and social relations are so closely connected, that the impairing of one of necessity impairs the rest. So too with men. Take a poet, Homer, Shakespeare, or La Fontaine ; an historian, Thucydides, Livy, or Gregoire de Tours ; a philosopher, Plato, Bacon, or Descartes, — his style, opinions, morals, tendencies, and starting so depend on those of his coevals, that, were you to transform any one of the group, the rest would have to be modified likewise. Whence this irresistible mutual dependence ? If you decompose all the parts of a literary whole, you discover that they arise from, and are governed by, a limited number of forces, often by one only, which maintains the harmony and union of the group. Throughout the same historical period, philosophy, arts, and the state receive their leading characteristics from some ruling and paramount faculty. They “all bear the impress of the same stamp.” Thus, to know what man is, we must not “collect scattered waves, but reach the source. It does not matter whether this or that wave was formed and fed by innumerable and distant springs ; we must ascertain the direction and force of the current, and feel the impulse which impels it.” In simpler words, to know an object consists in knowing its cause, and following it through its multifarious effects.

The leading features of all historical events, then, spring

from a primitive formula, which points to a universal force always present, ever acting, ruling, supreme. It is that force alone which should command the attention of the philosopher. The aim of history therefore is, while eschewing the multitude of details which too often clog the way, to reach the ruling force, to ascertain its formulas, to determine the necessities which cause their mutual dependence, and finally to unfold the hereditary types and primitive condition of things.

Applied to particulars, this ambitious doctrine gives rise to questions which have not yet been solved. Can we sum up all individualities, all talents, all capacities, within a mere formula? Can we use exact methods in our appreciation and criticism? Do the faculties of a man, like the several organs of a plant, really depend on one another, and were they created by a law sole and universal? Granted that there is such a law, can we calculate its force and vitality, or foresee its good and evil effects? Do we possess a ruling faculty, the uniform action of which imparts a necessary system of motions which philosophy may foretell and analyze?

To all these questions M. Taine unhesitatingly answers in the affirmative. Many opponents of note give a negative reply. We can only hope that time, thought, and experience may sustain every one of our author's assertions. But, in the present state of our knowledge, we do not feel disposed to indorse doctrines so bold, subversive, and revolutionary. Our reasons are as follows.

The mutual dependence and close connection which form the basis of M. Taine's system undoubtedly exist in the physical world, and every discovery in science adds new evidences of necessary relations. But when endeavoring to carry the analogy into a new field, and to apply similar rules to the mysterious workings of the intellect, aspirations, and destiny of man, we find that they yield no such satisfactory results. There is too much individuality, the dissimilarity of primitive types is too great, the consequences are too various and uncertain, even with original conditions wholly similar, to admit of the application of dogmatic formulas to the inner workings and decisive actions of men. We fail to perceive in the individual history of a poet, artist, or statesman rules and ulti-

mate effects which are entirely and necessarily reproduced or reflected in the workings of the state, and *vice versa*. No analytical historian, no critic, has yet succeeded in giving absolute rules, deduced from positive examples, which could enable us to unlock and unfold the necessary principles of action of any representative man or era in their universality, Vico, Herder, and Hegel not excepted. It is no argument to say that in such matters the proofs cannot be of such a positive and absolute nature as to exact the assent or conviction of all. If you adopt mathematical reasonings, give mathematical conclusions. There are facts in the domain of abstract truth which no one can deny; and it is no unreasonable presumption to require evidences adequate to the subject, and possessing the same degree of clearness which we find in matters equally abstruse and difficult. Nor should we forget that M. Taine claims to have discovered a method wholly algebraical, and a sort of philosophical geometry, of which the high-sounding principles, severally named *abstraction*, *hypothesis*, and *verification*, form the magic key.

Yet, if we believe in the science of history as now taught and expounded, — in that science which aims at unfolding the laws of the social and political world, exhibiting, through the medium of historical similitudes, a progressive march toward a necessary end, as yet unknown to us, but believed to be within our reach, — we cannot entirely disprove in men what so many concede to states, however large or however insignificant. But can we admit with M. Taine — and it is not the most serious objection — that “the forces which govern men are similar to those which govern nature,” without granting likewise that a succession of necessities governs both the moral and physical worlds? Can we repeat with our author, after Condillac, that the nature of a being consists only in a group of distinct abstractions, embodied in systematic combinations and relations of facts, without destroying a belief, universal and overwhelming, in the substantial reality of all beings?

M. Taine's repeated efforts in the field of British literature claim at our hands a slight digression from his metaphysics to literary criticism. It is rarely given to French critics to review the works of an English author with skill and impartial-

ity. Whatever they may say to the contrary, it is evident that a large majority of them can never be made to feel the force of the Anglo-Saxon, and perceive all the excellences of the British writers. So far as ideas alone are concerned, they indeed see a vast deal in our poems, plays, and essays, but not everything, and they often add notions of their own to many passages which to us bear a very different interpretation. The fact is, that it requires not only a constant study, but large experience of life in England or America, to become pervaded with the spirit which prompts and vivifies all our original productions in prose and in verse. Now, how few Frenchmen have dwelt long enough in England or America, paid the requisite attention to the characteristics of our race, or sufficiently studied our literary history in its origin and developments, to perceive in a work truly and solely English that which constitutes its chief merits! The naked facts and general ideas, the form and method, are certainly within the reach of any foreign critic; for these may exist in his language as well as in our own, and are among the constituent parts of the intellect in its universality; but when a Paris reviewer, with the help of heavy dictionaries always at his elbow, or a flying trip to London in a *train de plaisir*, imagines that he may acquire the language, master the peculiarities, and share the *animus* of our writers of poetry and fiction, he commits a grave error.

There are exceptions. We consider M. Villemain's essays on Pope, Byron, and others, as complete as any ever written in England. That learned and eloquent man seems to possess the instinct to mark with unerring accuracy the leading traits and absolute merits of our authors, but he stands alone in the array of reviewers who for the last fifty years have endeavored to initiate the French public into the manifold beauties of our Anglo-Saxon literature. Why is this? We are not aware that he ever lived in England. M. Philarète Chasles, on the other hand, spent seven years in Oxford; he is at present, and has been for a long time, the Lecturer on English Literature in the celebrated College of France; and yet there is not a single chapter in the seven huge volumes which he has written on the British and American authors which any of us could read with pleasure or profit.

M. Taine, who is evidently drifting toward a specialty, has been more successful in his attempts at describing to the readers of the *Débats* the characteristics of our first novelists and historians. English literature seems to him a rich and promising mine, as yet unworked. Eager to carve out for himself a reputation based upon original researches, he evinces in his later articles marks of close study and of a certain insight into the peculiarities of men and manners in England. That he analyzes the modern authors, as yet, with more enthusiasm than accuracy, and favors Dickens and Thackeray with classifications, divisions, subdivisions, and finicalities of which they never dreamed, does not admit of a doubt. He may also be charged with giving vent to an admiration so continuous and so overwhelming, when commenting upon writers who are merely clever and interesting, that the reader is often tempted to ask where our critic will find adequate words and exclamations when obliged to speak of Shakespeare and Milton. This unlimited disposition to praise and admire is often the result of a first acquaintance with foreign authors. We feel so glad, so proud, to read, in the original, works which we knew merely through imperfect translations, that we do not stop to reflect, and to analyze our early impressions. It is only after a few years of constant practice, when familiar with the new order of thought and of forms which break upon us while reading Dante in Italian, Corneille in French, or Schiller in German, that our judgment may be said to acquire the requisite soberness. Until then we should be chary of imparting to a benevolent public opinions generally transient and superficial.

We do not know what advantages M. Taine may have enjoyed in studying Carlyle and Macaulay; but candor prompts us to say that his reviews of those two authors are not calculated to alter the opinion already formed by most English readers. The racy style, striking form, and grandiloquent encomiums which are the leading features in his essays may please, but fail to instruct. An entire History of English Literature, which we understand our critic is engaged in preparing for the press, should be so written as to prove useful not only to French readers, but also to the English, who are after all the best judges of such matters. Now, how few of

the foreign comments on Hamlet or Cymbeline, Hudibras or the Rape of the Lock, can bear a translation !

In his last article on Mill's Logic, published only a few weeks ago in *La Revue des Deux Mondes*, we discern a decided improvement, which may be attributed to the subject, — Logic, M. Taine's constant study, the object of his love and admiration, the ideal which he sees or inserts in all things. There, in the midst of those attenuated processes of reasoning, he breathes freely, feels his strength, expounds and teaches with zest and success. It is really interesting to see how faithfully he dissects the work of the great English logician, and with what consummate skill he simplifies and abridges the most fugitive thoughts to be found in the whole range of human abstractions. The dialogue form, that faint echo of the thorough analyses of Plato, for which the Paris Normal School has always been noted, is made to play an important part in this, as well as in most of M. Taine's later essays. No reader can forget the striking, lively, though one-sided dialogues between Peter and Paul, in his exposition of the modern French philosophers. Yet it is not every subject which admits of such a rapid succession of questions and replies ; and when too often repeated, it never fails to impart a certain sameness which justly fatigues the reader.

It is due to M. Taine to say, that he is not only an imaginative, although analytical writer, but a critic of great scientific attainments and erudition. He exhibits at all times a knowledge of history in its philosophy, and of philosophy in its history, which can be the growth only of deep and extensive research. Whether he defines the salient characteristics of Livy or Machiavelli, Cousin or Jouffroy, the reader perceives that page after page teems with sound inferences, and with criticisms terse and true. His comprehensive surveys and deductions manifest intellectual power of the highest order, fully evolved and methodically trained. Disdaining the details of a precise or technical erudition, he is ever in search of ruling and universal principles, susceptible of scientific verification. He may occasionally mistake preconceived notions for the logical results of a careful investigation ; his hypotheses sometimes dictate the expected consequences ; but his earnest-

ness is so great that, even when sporting with logical forms, every word tells, every assertion leaves an indelible mark. His forms are sometimes abrupt, his assertions always dogmatical, his illustrations familiar. He cannot be said to aim at producing rhetorical effects, and yet one may easily detect evidences of a close attention to the rounding of his periods. Familiar as he is with the methods of logic, fond of analysis, eager to introduce at all times formulas, axioms, postulates, and corollaries, some of his pages bristle with geometrical forms which startle without convincing the reader.

He is eminently witty and ironical, and his style of sarcastic argumentation has rarely been surpassed. We wish we could give our readers some of his descriptions; especially those of Cousin and Jouffroy, where, making of the one a court abbé, the lover of Madame de Longueville, a pulpit orator, a worldly and wordy metaphysician, and of the other a sedate Englishman, a distinguished graduate of Cambridge, and a pupil of Locke, he exhibits, in language of singular grace and polish, and with keen irony, the peculiar merits and the mutual contradictions of those two celebrated eclectic philosophers.

In fine, M. Tainé must be considered as an author of uncommon literary excellence, unquestionable originality, and surpassing energy and promise. His style is peculiar, at times eloquent, always correct, firm, and forcible. And when we recollect his strength as a writer, his ingenuity as a logician, and his success as an acute reasoner, we feel tempted to apply to him the measure which he has so felicitously applied to others. Livy, he says, is *orator in historia*, Cousin, *orator in philosophia*. What shall we say of M. Tainé? *Orator in dialectica*.